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TOOTH-PLANING OR SANDING NOT NECESSARY TO EFFECT STRONG GLUED WOOD JOINTS

The opinion, frequently expressed, that roughened surfaces such as are produced by tooth-planing, sanding, and similar operations, are necessary to make strong glued joints is not borne out by experiments conducted at the Forest Products Laboratory. An extensive series of tests with Sitka spruce, white oak, and sugar maple demonstrated that, if good gluing conditions are employed, it is possible to make, with smooth flat surfaces, joints equal in strength to those produced with surfaces that have been scratched or otherwise roughened.

Animal glue mixed in the proportion of 1 pound of glue to 2-1/4 pounds of water was used in the experiments, and the strength of joints produced with tooth-planed and sanded surfaces was compared with the strength of joints produced with smooth-planed surfaces.

The wood used was allowed to condition in a room at 30 percent relative humidity to a constant moisture content of about 7 percent. The boards were then cut to about 3/4 by 5 by 12 inches and matched as to density. Approximately 30 depressions per inch, 1/32 inch deep, were made in a part of the boards with a tooth plane. For sanding, comparatively coarse sandpaper was used. Both tooth-planing and sanding were done by hand.

In the gluing operation, pairs of blocks surfaced by smooth-planing were alternated with those surfaced by tooth-planing and sanding so that all conditions of gluing might be exactly comparable for each type. Under this plan, any consistent difference in strength of joint must be ascribed to the method of surfacing the blocks. The blocks were glued together face to face.

The regular Laboratory block shear test, by which the joint is subjected to a compressive shearing force in a specially designed machine, was used to test joint strength. The strength of joints in pounds per square inch and the nature and percentage of wood failure¹ were recorded.

The experiments were conducted under three sets of gluing conditions -- good gluing conditions, starved-joint conditions, and chilled-joint conditions. A starved joint is one in which the film of glue between the wood surfaces is not continuous; it results when thin glue is used with high pressure. A chilled joint is one made with chilled glue.

Under good gluing conditions, smooth-planed surfaces gave slightly stronger joints than tooth-planed surfaces in two out of three cases. The differences, however, are not great enough to conclude that tooth-planing weakens the joint to any marked extent.

Under conditions that normally produced starved joints, tooth-planed surfaces on two of the three species gave higher joint strength than smooth surfaces. The joints produced in this way were not so strong, however, as the smooth-planed joints under good gluing conditions.

Chilled joints were stronger with smooth-planed than with tooth-planed surfaces. This may be accounted for by the fact that it is difficult to apply the extra pressure needed to force the chilled glue uniformly into the depressions produced in the wood surface by tooth-planing.

¹Wood failure is the shearing apart of the wood fibers near the glue joint which indicates that the bond between the glue and the wood is stronger than the wood itself.

The following table shows the results of the strength tests with animal glue under the three different gluing conditions:

Species :		Normal :		Comparative strength of joints			
of :		condition :		Tooth-planed		Smooth	
wood :		of glued :		Strength		Strength	
:		joints :		Wood		Wood	
:		:		failure :		failure	
:		:		:		:	
:		:		Lbs. per sq.		Lbs. per sq.	
:		:		in.		in.	
:		:		Percent		Percent	
Sugar	Good	3132	62	3148	69		
maple	Starved	2261	4	1993	6		
	Chilled	2718	36	3014	27		
White	Good	2401	51	2317	66		
oak	Starved	2019	28	1786	26		
	Chilled	2501	64	2508	70		
Sitka	Good	1792	78	1853	88		
spruce	Starved	1932	94	1941	96		
	Chilled	1649	33	1803	61		

The experiments show that while occasionally the average strength of glued joints obtained with tooth-planed surfaces is higher than that obtained with smooth-planed surfaces, such results are apparently confined to starved-joint conditions. Where starved-joint conditions exist, the remedy is to improve the gluing conditions rather than to roughen the surfaces of the wood.